



Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Surgeons

February 23, 2015

SUPPORTING Testimony

before the Public Health Committee

H.B. 5625 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF SURGERY

Good Morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dr. Kathy LaVorgna. I am a board certified general surgeon practicing in Norwalk. I am past President of both the Connecticut State Medical Society and the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Surgeons. I am here today to support H.B. 5625 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF SURGERY on behalf of the over 230 member surgeons and of the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Surgeons and the over 150 resident (surgeons in training) members in Connecticut.

“Surgery” is an action, performed by a licensed and specially trained professional, which ***transforms living tissue in an irreversible way.***

Tissues are changed in predictable, but irreversible ways, with the goal of making a diagnosis, treating a disease, removing diseased or damaged parts, reconstructing the body, adding prosthetics/implants, or alleviating pain.

Forms of surgery have evolved from ancient methods utilizing knives and hot irons to rapidly changing technology that uses many forms of devices and energies to transform tissue. These include tools (scalpels, saws, drills, etc), high temperature cautery, high energy ultrasound waves, high energy light (lasers) and even high pressure streams of water.

Educational Requirements:

A surgeon is among the most highly trained health care providers and undergo many years of training before they may perform surgery independent of supervision. After completing an undergraduate education, an aspiring surgeon must complete four years of medical school. After completing medical school they enter a residency training program which usually lasts between 5-8 years depending on the specialty, as many complete Fellowships in an area of specialization. During these years they are taught to perform surgical procedures by experienced and credentialed surgeons, with graduated responsibilities over the duration of their training.

Surgical training involves the intellectual ability to know when tissue transformation is the appropriate course of treatment, as well as the mechanical skills to perform those transformations. Outcomes are reviewed by those performing the surgeries and their peers. Unusual cases are discussed for the education of others, and unexpected outcomes are analyzed at regular intervals to assure patient safety and the highest quality of care and technique.

After the completion of training, examining boards assess the competency of a surgeon to go on to practice. They review the surgeon's use of his/her learned knowledge as well as his/her operative experience and outcomes. If they feel the quality of a surgeon's work is unacceptable, they are authorized to prevent that surgeon from practicing surgery. Additionally, surgeons are required to complete significant continuing education to maintain licensure, Board Certification and society memberships.

Professional Support:

Physicians of all specialties understand the importance of surgery. The American Medical Association (AMA) has adopted a definition of surgery (H-475.983 Definition of Surgery). This definition is the accepted definition of surgery by all participating surgical specialty societies in the AMA. The definition that we present to you today hews very closely to that AMA definition.

As of today some 23 states have adopted some form of a definition of surgery. Connecticut does not have a legal definition of surgery despite the term "surgery" being used close to 200 times in our state's laws and regulations.

We have gathered the support for the definition we present today from the following Connecticut societies: The Connecticut State Medical Society, The Connecticut Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society, The Connecticut State ENT Society, Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians, The Connecticut Orthopaedic Society, and The Connecticut Urology Society.

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the Connecticut Chapter believe that it is the professional and ethical responsibility of its members to assure that patients receive safe, appropriate surgical care of the highest quality from those physicians who possess the proper training within their scope to perform surgery in a defined manner. We believe the citizens of this state deserve the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy LaVorgna, MD, FACS